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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [NI](#)  
SUBJECT: SOUTHERN NIGERIA POLITICAL TIDBITS FOR NOVEMBER  
2006

REF: LAGOS 1369

Classified By: Consul General Brian L. Browne for reasons 1.4 b and d

11. (C) Summary: Kidnappers may be trying new tactics in Rivers State. Tinubu aide terms Lagos political scene tense. Edo State contact scoffs at idea of a Lucky Igbinedion Vice-Presidency. Senators in Cross-River State accuse contractors of embezzling money intended for development. Officials detail voter registration problems in Delta and Abia States. Unions plan to rally in protest of President Obasanjo's term-extension machinations. End summary.

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RIVERS: ARE BOGUS MEETINGS NEW KIDNAPPING TACTICS?  
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12. (C) According to a security contact, gangs and criminal groups may be telephoning expatriate targets to lure them into particular locations to kidnap them. On November 21 an expatriate senior manager of an oil services company in Port Harcourt received a call from someone purporting to be a member of the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF). The caller threatened the manager and told him to go to a hotel off the east/west road near Port Harcourt. Undercover government officials staked out the location and reportedly saw "several known miscreants" around the hotel.

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LAGOS: TINUBU AIDE TERMS POLITICAL SCENE "TENSE"  
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13. (SBU) In a conversation with Poloff, Special Advisor for Security to the Lagos State Governor Alex Panox described the Lagos political scene as tense. Panox told Poloff aggrieved Action Congress (AC) gubernatorial aspirants are accusing Governor Bola Tinubu of anointing a successor, former Chief of Staff Babatunde Fashola, and ignoring the open primary process. This accusation, along with the People's Democratic Party (PDP)'s determination to win Lagos at any cost, will make the race for the governorship a very edgy affair, Panox said.

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EDO: IGBINEDION VICE-PRESIDENCY UNLIKELY  
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14. (C) Edo State National Union of Journalists Chair Michael Otunba dismissed rumors of a possible Vice-Presidential run by Governor Lucky Igbinedion, commenting "This (the Vice-Presidency) is a carrot they are using to entice him." Regarding Igbinedion's current standing in Edo State, Otunba quipped, "The Governor will be lucky to get through his two terms unscathed."

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CROSS-RIVER: 120M NAIRA FOR DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS STOLEN?  
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¶5. (U) A senator in the National Assembly alleged that Federal government contractors in Cross-River State have fled the state with 120 million naira (approximately 940,000 USD) meant to carry out development projects. In the State's Southern District, Senator Bassey Henshaw, who anticipated four borehole projects in his zone, made the claim after his attempts to contact the contractors and the Federal Ministry of Water Sanitation were unsuccessful.

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DELTA: SECURITY THREAT KEEPS ASSEMBLYWOMAN ON THE MOVE  
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¶6. (SBU) In a brief November 22 conversation with Poloff, National House Assemblywoman Temi Harriman, representing Warri Federal Constituency, decried the difficulties she and fellow voters face trying to register on Warri's single voter registration machine. Machine scarcity forces the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) to constantly move one machine among several registration sites, making it a guessing game when the machine will be at the particular location that individual voter should register. The Assemblywoman has not been able to register in her own district. Harriman said she wants to see INEC use simultaneous manual voter registration.

¶7. (C) Harriman commented that when she visits Warri for the weekends she resides at a different location each evening for security purposes. Political tension and security have

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always been issues, Harriman said, but she would not be surprised to see violence in the run up to the elections. To avoid problems, Harriman said that there should be separate registration stations for Ijaw and Itsekiri, a stark reminder of the divide that continues to exist between the two groups.

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ABIA: EVEN STATE INEC CRITICIZES REGISTRATION  
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¶8. (U) In an early November meeting with Poloff, Abia State INEC Commissioner Suleiman Bello attributed registration problems to the "fire brigade" approach, referring to INEC's tendency to do everything at the last minute. Bello complained about a lack of machines and inadequate training, but said no problems had arisen with the operation of the machines. Technical officers from Abuja arrived in Abia on the first day and fixed the few technical glitches, he said. Abia has a total of only 21 machines and 17 generators. The main problem was a lack of machines, Bello commented.

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EDO: PERIPATETIC VOTER REGISTRATION SITES  
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¶9. (U) Poloff on a November 30 visit to Benin City saw astride one of the main roads several small signs stating "INEC registration", posted on a fence approximately 100 meters from the PDP State Secretariat. Stopping to view the registration, Poloff did not see any machines but did observe several men sitting in chairs reading the daily papers. One of the men advised registration had moved "far away."

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UNIONS TO RALLY AGAINST "TERM-EXTENSION"  
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¶10. (C) Denja Yaqub of the Nigeria Labour Congress told Poloff November 22 the Central Working Committee (presidents and general secretaries of 29 member unions) will hold a

rally to draw attention to President Obasanjo's term-extension attempts. On November 22 the unions issued a statement "uncovering" Obasanjo's intention to use a provision of the electoral act to postpone elections in the case of national crises. The unions believe the recent spate of "states of emergency" and political turmoil in certain states has been created by the President to allow him to extend in office, Yaqub advised. The statement will be followed by nationwide rallies; dates and locations to be decided.

¶11. (U) This cable was cleared by Embassy Abuja.  
BROWNE